

HE—SHE AND THE IMP

By A. C. ROWSEY

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He went to breakfast fully prepared and determined to speak about it. When half through the meal, he compromised with himself—he would just hint.

Yet the evening came. With it his laundry and the landlady, and the hint was not yet given.

Mrs. Halstead was the landlady, or "the mother of two, the relict of three," as the cheerful idiot in the hall-room epitomized her. "He was only a counter jumper," the landlady scornfully remarked before she fired him.

Mrs. Halstead had watched the old man all day. In her mind he had been construed and reconstructed into a possible fourth in the "also ran" class, whereby she should change her name—and later wear crapes. For three months at one time she had fluttered around the heart because of an air of embarrassment about him when he looked at her. Finally he told her about some mice that had invaded his closet. In her eyes it was evidently only a hasty excuse when his courage failed him.

The "old chump," as she called him, had recently assumed mourning and remained in his room all day. These two things urged Mrs. Halstead to encourage him to speak his mind, arguing quite accurately that some one had died and he had inherited.

So she plumped herself in a chair after laying the laundry on the bed. Grimly she waited.

Mr. Peters was rejoiced at her lingering. The lean old man paced the floor, favoring her at every turn with a look of indecision.

"Mrs. Halstead," he began hesitatingly—he seemed to be talking to the rosebuds on the carpet—"I have—been—wanted to speak to you about— He flushed, closed his thin lips obstinately and continued his walk irresolutely.

"Was there ever such an old fool?" she said to herself under cover of her apron—her face had a habit of perspiring under mental pressure. "About?" she queried in her smoothest tone. Her supplemental toilet was finished.

"Yes, about?" His heart forsook him. "Well, I guess another time will do. Mrs. Halstead." He sat down, trembling.

In the glare that she threw at the back of his bald head the orange blossoms were drooping, drooping and going.

"Now, Mr. Peters," she coaxed, "hadn't you better get it off your mind once and for all? I know'd you wanted to say—something—oh, the coy ways of forty-five years and 180 pounds—and—couldn't just get the hang of it—how to say it, I mean."

Her words were very grateful to him. "Perhaps you are right; only I thought—it might—be considered—eccentric—er—imbecile—senile—"

"I'd like to see any one say so, sir," she blurted, like a porcupine, or as only a landlady can. "They would not stay in this house and say it. Besides, I think every one—shyly—rather expects it."

"Oh, indeed? Well, I am sure—still, it is very gratifying—very, very," said the old man. "You see, the newspapers say there are 300 of them to choose from. Do you think you could get a nice, pretty one—for me?"

She was bewildered, but not entirely nonplused. From experience she knew the old man had a habit of speaking "adventurous thoughts" aloud.

"You won't mind the children?" endeavoring to bring him round to the main chance and at the same time ascertain the future status of her two little darlings.

"Why, bless you, no," he exclaimed. "I love children—always have—good ones. Now that I feel financially able to care for one, I want to indulge myself. It has been the dream of my life." The old man was talking to himself. "I have lived a lonesome life. I never had a hobby, like other men, except this." Then he turned to her. "I prefer a boy, not too old—two or three years, I trust, would be old enough; also, while I think of it, I will pay you for any trouble he may cause you." Mr. Peters drew forth his wallet. His face was full of a tremulous excitement.

Mrs. Halstead mentally heard a dull thud as the bottom fell out of her hopes. But she did not show it when the old man placed a bill and a newspaper clipping in her palm and dismissed her with "Please get him tomorrow, poor little chap! I suppose they feed them on bread and water. He must be hungry." For, if the truth be known, the old man had in his early youth been an item of public expense owing to the bibulous habits of his male progenitor.

A forlorn hope presented itself to her. "Why, Mr. Peters, why don't you get married and— Her modesty would not allow her to proceed.

"Bless my soul!" And he scratched his bald head dubiously, then meditatively. Presently he gazed at her attentively. "I don't know—I never thought of it." She fluttered with the quiet agitation of her weight, age and experience.

"Hem! Well, I'll—it won't make any difference. I'll try the boy first."

It was a month later. He sat with his knees wide spread and his elbows resting on their bony knobs. His heels were hooked in the rung of his chair, and his careworn old face rested in the palms of his upturned hands. In front

of him, on another chair, was the youngster, Robbie, crying.

"What is the matter with him—now?" the old man asked himself wearily. The child yelled. The foster father clawed his ears with his wrinkled hands and hoped, in a despairing fashion, that Mrs. Halstead would come to the rescue. Then he dreaded her look of disapproval at the mess around the child. Toys of every description—pictures and picture books, his watch, fancy bottle stoppers, about everything not nailed—was there. Still the imp cried: "Mamma! Mamma! Yobbe wants mamma!" Yell! Yell! Yell!

The little spinster dressmaker who lived in the hall room passed the door just as Robbie achieved a brilliant chef d'œuvre of yells. She skipped by in a scented manner, hurriedly inserted the key in her door and vanished. Peters and she had never exchanged a word, although he had occupied his room ten years and she had been in hers a year before. He was prejudiced against her in those early days because she ran a sewing machine sometimes at night. The cause had ceased to exist, but the prejudice still clung to him, although he never protested against her. She on her part had grown to regard him as a gruff old ogre—past whose door she always hastened.

This afternoon he actually yearned for her or Mrs. Halstead or any woman to soothe the youngster. He sat there wondering if he knew anything about children. He hesitated. Robbie began to take in air for another outburst. Peters darted into the hall and knocked timidly at her door.

A few minutes later the child was sobbing on her breast, pouring out his tale of woe in indistinguishable syllables, while the distrustful Peters walked the floor, eying the imp apprehensively. Miss Robinson held the child tenderly, absorbed in her office. The foster father was entirely out of the picture. The little woman loved children dearly.

Mr. Peters read the letter and heaved a sigh of relief. It was from his niece and contained an invitation to make his home with her. He had never seen his niece until the executor of the estate introduced her at a meeting of the heirs.

Mrs. Halstead came in person to make his bed. The signs displayed at the breakfast table had actually made her blush and the boarders stare. Such looks! Such smiles!

"Mrs. Halstead," he began briskly. Her portly form was bent with tucking in the clothes. "I am thinking of making a change in my life—a great change." He paused for encouragement.

"Yes," sweetly.

"Now—you see—Robbie and this woman next door—Miss Robinson—she—I supposed women have—great ways with children." Warclouds gathered on the widow's face. "And I"—

"Not Miss Robinson?" exclaimed the landlady.

"Bless me, yes!" He looked at her in astonishment.

"Well, I declare!" Out of the door she bounced, with blood in her eye.

"Now, what is the matter with her?" he asked himself, rubbing his glasses and peering down the hall. "What strange creatures women are!"

He had intended telling her that from the way Robbie took to the spinster it seemed best to provide female care for him in the person of his niece.

"Papa," called Robbie. The old man started. The boy had kicked the covers from his cot. Mr. Peters looked gravely down at him.

The boy grinned back, tossed his bare fat legs and chuckled.

"You—you little imp," commented Peters, with a smile, "do you know?"

His niece went out of the room with her nose held high in air. He shook his fist with latent rage at her vanishing form. The idea! Send the boy back because, forsooth, she didn't like children!

The muffled sound of sobs came to his ears from Miss Robinson's room. He felt the hush of "the great idea."

"I—Mrs. Halstead—ordered me—to move!" the spinster explained tearfully when she answered his knock. "It seems so like—like home."

Then he managed to get out "the great idea." She? Oh—well—for love—of the—boy—yes.

An Exhorter's Little Blunder. "Public speakers often make curious mistakes," said an observant man, "and I have had occasion to note some rather singular things in this respect. Some time ago I attended a religious meeting in an out of the way section of the country, and the very first thing the speaker said put me to thinking. He was a short, stocky fellow, with a rasping voice, and was as solemn looking as if he had been going to the guillotine. Here is the first thing he said to say: 'I want to say a few words before saying what I want to say.' I could not refrain from laughing at the bad break of the fellow, and all the good things he said after that had no effect on me. It was wasted ammunition, so far as I was concerned. This goes to show what a little mistake will sometimes do for a man. Really I believe the exhorter was as much put out by the bull as I was amused, for his talk was not as smooth as it might have been."—New Orleans Times-Democrat.

Doubtless. Voice (in the house)—Bessie, what is keeping you out there on the porch so long?

Bessie—I am looking for the comet, mamma.

Voice—You'll take your death of cold. Bessie—Not at all, mamma. I'm—I'm well wrapped.—Chicago Tribune.

WORKING WITHOUT SYSTEM

Lack of Mental Control and Concentration Is Fatal.

A man who does forcible work must dismiss a subject from his mind when he is done with it. This increases the grasp and power of the mind and keeps it clear for concentration upon the thing under consideration. Nothing can be accomplished with half a mind; you must concentrate or focus all your powers upon the thing you are doing. This you can never do when things by the score are half settled in your mind, continually obtruding themselves for consideration, and hindering the thought of present problems.

When you have anything in hand, settle it. Do not look at it, lay it down, then look at something else and lay that down also, but settle things as you go along. It is a thousand times better to make an occasional mistake than never to settle anything, but be always balancing, weighing and considering many things at a time.

It is vigorous thought which counts. A subject which is handled, so to speak, with the tips of the mental fingers, never amounts to anything. You must seize and grasp with all your might the thing you are attempting, and do it with vigor and enthusiasm. If you wish to bear the stamp of superiority when completed. Another defect in your work, which arises from the faults I have mentioned, is failure to complete things. Your work bears the impress of incompleteness, and seems always to lack something.

If you could overcome these defects you might be successful, for you really possess great ability, but lack definiteness. Evidently your mind has not been trained to exactitude. There has been carelessness in your education somewhere. It may be partly the fault of your teachers or your parents in not calling your attention in early life to these deficiencies. If this had been done the task of correction would have been easier than it is now, but the faults may still be overcome if proper diligence be used. I hope, for your own sake, that you will set about it with determination.—Success.

PICKINGS FROM FICTION.

She took on mighty few airs for a person in mourning.—"Lovey Mary."

One cannot be happy until he has learned how, and for that one must suffer.—"One's Womenkind."

If we could only take chloroform for difficult tasks and wake to find them done!—"His Daughter First."

There's no hope this side of the grave for the man who knows it all. On the other side the devil doesn't want him.—The Lord won't have him.—"Adam Rush."

Some of us see the rosary of life only as separate beads, not touching the divine constraining thread, and are taken by surprise when we come to the cross.—"Moth and Rust."

Our thoughts, our opinions, are like apples on the tree; they must take time to ripen, and when they are ripe how easily they fall! A mere nudge brings them down.—"Literary Values."

The only ghosts, I believe, who creep into this world are dead young mothers returned to see how their children fare. There is no other inducement great enough to bring the departed back.—"The Little White Bird."

Sticky Onion Juice.

A very convenient mucilage can be made out of onion juice by any one who wishes to use it. A good sized Spanish onion, after being boiled a short time, will yield on being pressed quite a large quantity of very adhesive fluid. This is used quite extensively in various trades for pasting paper on to tin or zinc or even glass, and the tenacity with which it holds would surprise any one on making the first attempt. It is the cheapest and best mucilage for such purposes and answers just as well as many of the more costly and patent cements. Some of the cements sold by street fakirs at 10 cents a bottle consist of nothing but onion juice and water, and the bottle and cork cost a great deal more than the contents.

Sharing His Bed.

A Grub Street friend of Dr. Johnson's was Derrick, of whom he wrote, "I honor Derrick for his strength of mind." One night when Floyd, another poor author, was wandering about the streets he found Derrick asleep upon a bulk. Upon being suddenly awakened Derrick started up. "My dear Floyd," said he, "I am sorry to see you in this destitute state. Will you go home with me to my lodgings?" And they turned in on the bulk together like the good fellows they were.

Why Harry Wasn't Proud.

Little Harry's oldest sister has just presented her husband with a new baby.

"Well, Harry," said his father, "do you feel proud of being an uncle?"

"No," replied the urchin.

"Why not?" asked his father.

"Cause I ain't no uncle; I'm an aunt. The new baby's a girl!"—New York Press.

His Assumption.

"Scribbler's such a queer fellow."

"Is he?"

"Yes. He sent the manuscript of his new book by express and labeled it 'Valuable.'"

Not Fickle.

Mrs. Lakeside—Is she fickle?

Mrs. La Salle—It seems not. She has been married to the same man three times in succession.—Philadelphia Ledger.

Wealth is something that enables a millionaire to stand up in meeting and say it is no disgrace to be poor.—Chicago News.

CHILD STUDY.

The study of child psychology is attracting ever increasing interest and enthusiasm. Problems in crime and insanity are becoming solvable. The right of the child to proper treatment, bodily and mental, is making a stronger appeal. It is coming to be better known just what treatment fosters a balanced development and just what physical conditions preclude the possibility of such development. Parents will know that the nervous, fractious child needs the services of a brain expert, possibly afterward of a skilled surgeon. It will be understood that stubbornness can be cured if rationally dealt with or made a nucleus of crime if murderously mismanaged. May every educated parent aid in this beneficent work by studying his own child fairly and impartially and collecting materials from his neighborhood that will give the students a broader outlook? Fair, honest statements from varying environments are of value. Read, study along this line and see what wonderful avenues of thought open up.—Health.

CURING AN OTHER SKIN.

A full grown sea otter is from four to five feet long and perhaps a foot or more wide. When a hunter secures one he loosens the hide from the nose and head, and, without cutting it lengthwise at all, he pulls the skin down over the body, the hide being so elastic that this is not a difficult job. It is then stretched over a smooth board six and a half feet long, nine inches wide at one end and ten at the other end. Each end of this board is tapered to a point. Another board exactly the same size is then inserted, and the skin is stretched a foot or eighteen inches longer than its original length.

A third board half the length of the other is wedged in and the skin lightly tacked at the ends to hold it in place. If any flesh adheres to the skin it is then cut off, and the hide is cured and dried in this condition. In a few days it is taken off the boards and turned fur side out, when it is ready for market.

EMERSON THE AMERICAN.

In Emerson as an American, as a patriot, we of the new world have an inheritance peculiarly our own which will grow richer with the spending, for the spending of such an inheritance means that we ourselves be spent for the republic. Far as we may go beyond our present failures, beyond what Morley calls this our corrupt period, far as we may go on the line of our nobler national accomplishments (and amid all our discouragements we must not forget these nobler accomplishments), far as we may travel up the pathway of our true ideals, still before us and ever higher on that pathway will be seen the beckoning figure, will be heard the urging and inspiring voice, of Emerson.—Century.

BLOOD CORPUSCLES.

The war between the white corpuscles of the blood and the microbes of disease was first described by the Russian pathologist, Metchnikoff. While devoting himself to the study of inflammations he in each case noted the presence of white cells in the blood currents in abnormal numbers. Inside these white cells he invariably found the specific microbes of the disease under consideration. It seemed that the big corpuscles were devouring the poisonous microbes. Sometimes the number taken up by a corpuscle was too great, and it died as a result. If this overcoming of the white corpuscles by the microbes was general the patient died.

A COMMON COLOR.

The elder Dumas once was wearing the ribbon of a certain order, having recently been made a commandant, and an envious friend remarked upon it. "My dear fellow," he said, "that cord is a wretched color! One would think it was your woeen vest that was showing!"

"Oh, no, my dear d'E—," replied Dumas with a smile. "You're mistaken. It's not a bad color; it is exactly the shade of the sour grapes in the fable."

WIG WEARING VERY OLD.

The ancient Egyptians wore long wigs, and the early Christians from A. D. 427 to A. D. 917 considered a false head covering a badge of distinction. This, too, in direct opposition to Tertullian, who in vain declared them devices and inventions of the devil, and Clement of Alexandria, who warned his hearers that when the sacred hands of the clergy were laid on their heads the blessing would not penetrate through the false hair.

LIMITED OPPORTUNITY.

"Did you call at Roxley's house?" inquired the young doctor's wife.

"Yes, and I wish he had sent for me sooner."

"Gracious! Is he seriously ill?"

"Quite the reverse. I'm afraid he'll be all right again before I get in a half dozen visits."—Philadelphia Ledger.

HIS "BETTER HALF."

A newly married man told us a tale of woe the other day which happens to every newly married man. When he got married his wife gave him half the clothes cupboard, but in only three weeks all his clothes were hanging on nails driven into the wall.—Exchange.

WHAT TO DO IN RHEUMATISM.

A professor at one of the allopathic colleges is reported to have said: "There are two things to be done in rheumatism—grin and bear it or bear it and not grin."—Homeopathic Envy.

WHY IT RASPED.

"Your voice," said the commanding officer, "is decidedly rasping!"

"Yes, sir," replied the subordinate, saluting. "I have been out roughing it with a file of soldiers all the morning."

THE INSTINCT FOR DOLLS.

Big Babies More Loved Than Their Gaudy Wax Sisters.

Few things are more psychologically interesting than the instinct which makes little girls sometimes before they are able to articulate seize upon any absurd object to satisfy the maternal instinct; even a bottle wrapped in a towel has served the purpose, for, like savages, when they worship they are content with the rudest imitation of the human figure. On that wretched caricature, the daubed and lumpy rag doll, boundless affection is bestowed, and with it how many Socratic dialogues are held!

As time goes on this rudimentary effigy is exchanged for others which better satisfy newly developed tastes and feelings. A girl of six is not content unless her doll baby bears some resemblance to her mother's baby. Added by this infuse of reality, the imagination leaps all bounds. But it is checked by too studied an imitation of life. The splendid, richly dressed creature of wax is never really loved. Its tameness chills the fancy. It is imposed upon the affections, not craved by them. And too large a doll is seldom much liked. A small doll, not too handsome, is usually the favorite.

As girls grow older there may often be seen a touching suggestion of a fact familiar in real life, a partiality for the weakest and least favored of the doll family. Good Housekeeping.

A BISMARCK INCIDENT.

It used to be the privilege of Austria's representative at any conference of representatives of the German states to smoke, the others refraining. This was supposed to be an acknowledgment of Austria's supremacy. At the first conference that Bismarck attended as Prussia's representative he began to puff smoke across the conference table as soon as the Austrian diplomat lit up. That set everybody present to smoking on equal terms, and Austria's supremacy got a blow.

IN THE INTEREST OF HUMANITY.

Chris Miller of Fremont, Neb., writes, "I have suffered from dyspepsia for more than 10 years. I was under the care of a number of doctors, made three trips away, and still no relief. Kodol Dyspepsia Cure being recommended to me by several who had used it, and as the last straw I concluded to try it. After the first two or three doses I began to improve and have taken seven bottles and feel like a new man. I write you this in the interest of humanity, hoping it may fall into the hands of some sufferer, and my prayer is that they may secure the same benefit that I have." Sold by Klesau Drug Co.

NOT OVER-DO.

There is an old allegorical picture of a girl seated at a grass hopper, but in the act of heedlessly treading on a snake. This is paralleled by the man who spends a large sum of money building a cyclone cellar, but neglects to provide his family with a bottle of Chamberlain's Colic, Cholera and Diarrhoea Remedy as a safeguard against bowel complaints, whose victims outnumber those of the cyclone a hundred to one. This remedy is everywhere recognized as the most prompt and reliable medicine in use for these diseases. For sale by Klesau Drug Co.

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My boy when four years old was taken with colic and cramps in his stomach. I sent for the doctor and he injected morphine, but the child kept getting worse. I then gave him half a teaspoonful of Chamberlain's Colic, Cholera and Diarrhoea Remedy, and in half an hour he was sleeping, and soon recovered.—F. L. Wilkins, Shell Lake, Wis. Mr. Wilkins is book-keeper for the Shell Lake Lumber Co. For sale by Klesau Drug Co.

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CONGRESSMAN LIVINGSTON

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